

Extraction Form (Covidence)

First author/Entity

[text box]

Year of publication

[text box]

Source type

You can select more than one option (this goes for all multiple-choice items in this extraction form).

1. Opinion piece (commentary – no empirical data)
2. Descriptive study (one time point – no intention to predict or explain)
3. Qualitative study (about methods – interviews, focus groups etc.)
4. Quantitative study
5. Experimental study (no training component)
6. Intervention study (training component)
7. Corpus study (analysing existing samples)
8. Professional book
9. Website: educational institution (conducts research)
10. Website: other
11. curriculum document
12. Other:
[text box]

Modality focus

1. Reading
2. Writing
3. Other:
[text box]

Participants/Target recipients

Only select options if empirical data was provided on participants or if the target audience is specified.

Your entry might look like any one or a combination of the following:

Secondary students (12-13 y/o)

Grade 7 students

year of schooling 8 (12-13 y/o)

All secondary students (12-18 y/o)

Tertiary/university students

Adult learners

EALD students

Educators

Professionals etc.

Copy and paste from the text. If unsure, leave this blank.

[text box]

Features of a topic sentence

HOW are the features of a topic sentence presented in the text and WHAT are they?

Choose all that apply (in other words, if a definition AND example are provided in the text, then fill in both). Leave blank all that do not apply. Please keep in mind that an example alone of a topic sentence or equivalent is not enough to code on its own, otherwise we might find ourselves projecting our own interpretations of a TS on an example if no features have been provided elsewhere in the text.

Copy and paste quotes for your entries (whole sentences at least for context). You can paste the same quote in multiple sections if relevant.

Definition

An explicit explanation of what constitutes a topic sentence (or equivalent) is provided in the literature. It might cover the form (syntactic elements, for example), function/purpose of the sentence, location (in the text), or when to write a topic sentence (process), and more.

For books, include a page number with the quotes.

For example: 'essays have topic sentences (68)'.

Location of the sentence

For example, the beginning (or near the beginning), middle, or end of a whole text, section, paragraph or other.

[text box]

Structure of the topic sentence

ie: what it should look like, components of the sentence etc.

[text box]

Function or role of the topic sentence:

[text box]

Instruction on process or strategy (how to):

[text box]

NOTES (unusual observations, uncertainties etc.)

[text box]

Description

While an explicit definition is not provided, the discussion in the paper reveals the characteristics of a topic sentence so they are apparent to the reader.

For books, include a page number with the quotes.

For example: 'essays have topic sentences (68)'.

Location of the sentence

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[text box]

Function or role of the topic sentence:

[text box]

Instruction on process or strategy (how to):

[text box]

NOTES (unusual observations, uncertainties etc.)

[text box]

Template

A type of blueprint for writing. It may take the form of a visual representation, an acronym or a series of headings representing a pattern that a text-type, and its parts, might follow. This could be located either in the paper or in the appendix.

For books, include a page number with the quotes.

For example: 'essays have topic sentences (68)'.

Location of the sentence

For example, the beginning (or near the beginning), middle, or end of a whole text, section, paragraph or other. If you cannot quote because it is an image, then describe it.

[text box]

Structure of the topic sentence

ie: what it should look like, components of the sentence etc. If you cannot quote because it is an image, then describe it.

[text box]

Function or role of the topic sentence:

If you cannot quote because it is an image, then describe it.

[text box]

Instruction on process or strategy (how to):

If you cannot quote because it is an image, then describe it.

[text box]

NOTES (unusual observations, uncertainties etc.)

[text box]

Example

Where authors provide a worked-sample of their own, or de-identified samples of student writing, that makes the characteristics of the topic sentence apparent to the reader through demonstration.

Should be accompanied by one of the above

For books, include a page number with the quotes.

For example: 'essays have topic sentences (68)'.

Location of the sentence

For example, the beginning (or near the beginning), middle, or end of a whole text, section, paragraph or other.

[text box]

Structure of the topic sentence

ie: what it should look like, components of the sentence etc.

[text box]

Function or role of the topic sentence:

[text box]

Instruction on process or strategy (how to):

[text box]

NOTES (unusual observations, uncertainties etc.)

[text box]

Any features not covered already**Extra features**

If there are any aspects of the TS that have not been covered by location, structure, function or instruction/process, please describe them here:

[text box]

QUOTE (sample text from the source)

[text box]

Synonyms**List synonyms used for 'topic sentence'**

Some examples of equivalent terms for 'topic sentence':

focus sentence, opening sentence, lead sentence, key sentence, controlling idea sentence, body paragraph sentence, point, supported point, claim, main idea, key statement.

[text box]

Context

Discourse type in which TS is discussed

1. Information report
2. Exposition
3. Persuasive writing
4. Argument writing
5. Discussion essay
6. Unspecified essay type
7. Paragraph writing
8. Academic or scientific writing
9. Letters
10. Blogs
11. Not specified
12. Other:

[text box]

END OF EXTRACTION**Glossary****Definition:**

An explicit explanation of what constitutes a topic sentence (or equivalent) is provided in the literature. It might cover the form (syntactic elements, for example), function/purpose of the sentence, location (in the text), or when to write a topic sentence (process), and more.

Description:

While an explicit definition is not provided, the discussion in the paper reveals the characteristics of a topic sentence so they are apparent to the reader.

Template:

A template is a type of blueprint for writing. It may take the form of a visual representation or a series of headings representing a pattern that a text-type, and its parts, might follow. This could be located either in the paper or in the appendix.

Example:

Where authors provide a worked-sample of their own, or de-identified samples of student writing, that makes the characteristics of the topic sentence apparent to the reader through demonstration.

Examples of equivalent terms for ‘topic sentence’:

focus sentence, opening sentence, lead sentence, key sentence, controlling idea sentence, body paragraph sentence, point, supported point, claim, main idea, key statement.

Eligible Sources

Authors	Title	Year Published	Journal/Source type	Volume	Issue
Abhinan, Wongkittiporn	Applying (Non)Head-Movement Mechanism to Study Topic Sentences in Applied Linguistics Research Articles	2025	African Educational Research Journal	13	1
Al Azher, I.; Reddy, V. D.; Alhoori, H.; Akella, A. P.	LimTopic: LLM-based Topic Modeling and Text Summarization for Analyzing Scientific Articles limitations	2024	24th ACM/IEEE Joint Conference on Digital Libraries- JCDL		
Alberta Learning,	Kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum	2000	<i>curriculum document</i>		
Alexander, Olwyn	The contribution of Halliday to EAP writing instruction: A personal journey	2019	Journal of English for Academic Purposes	41	
Allan Hancock College Writing Center	Topic sentences	n.d.	<i>website</i>		
Allosso, Salvatore F.	A Short Handbook for Writing Essays in the Humanities and Social Sciences	2019	<i>book</i>		
Allyson, Pitzel; Sara, Sanders; Kristine, Jolivet; Olivia, R. Hester; Aimee, J. Hackney	Exploring the Impact of Choice in Writing Prompt on Persuasive Writing Performance Using SRSD with Intensified Self-Instruction for a Student in a Residential Facility	2024	Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities	59	4
Alsharif, Amerah Abdullah; Alyousef, Hesham Suleiman	Investigating ESL/EFL students' approaches in response to revision processes: A case study	2017	Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies	13	2
Alwasidi, Mona A.; Al-Khalifah, Khaloud S.	Assessing the Impact of ChatGPT on EFL Students' Writing Productivity and Proficiency	2025	Journal of Language Teaching & Research	16	3
Arnold, Martha Thompson	Teaching Theme, Thesis, Topic Sentences, and Clinchers as Related Concepts	1981	Journal of Reading	24	5
Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority	English (Version 9.0)	n.d.	<i>curriculum document</i>		
Baumann, James F.; Serra, Judith K.	The frequency and placement of main ideas in children's social studies textbooks: a modified replication of Braddock's research on topic sentences	1984	Journal of Reading Behavior	16	1
BBC	How to write a critical essay: How to write effective topic sentences	n.d.	<i>website</i>		
Berry, Ann Bassett; Mason, Linda H.	The Effects of Self-Regulated Strategy Development on the Writing of Expository Essays for Adults with Written Expression Difficulties: Preparing for the GED	2012	Remedial & Special Education	33	2
Bowen, Neil Evan Jon Anthony	Essential knowledge and skills for essay writing: a practical guide for ESL and EFL undergraduates	2023	<i>book</i>		
Bridge, Connie A.; et al.,	Topicalization and memory for main ideas in prose	1984	Journal of Reading Behavior	16	1

Broekhoff, Mama	Downshifting: A Visual Technique for Teaching Paragraph Development	2003	ORTESOL Journal	22	
Brown, Kristine	Excel essential skills: essay writing step-by-step years 7-10	2002	<i>book</i>		
Brown, Mary	From Muddleton Manor to Clarity Cathedral: improving Year 12's extended writing through an enhanced sense of the reader	2013	Teaching History		150
Budd, Desiree; Whitney, Paul; Turley, Kandi Jo	Individual differences in working memory strategies for reading expository text	1995	Memory & Cognition	23	6
Burkhalter, Nancy	An instrument to aid in assessing editorials	1995	Journalism Educator	49	
Cekiso, M.; Tshotsho, B.; Somniso, M.	Exploring First-Year University Students' Challenges with Coherence Writing Strategies in Essay Writing in a South African University	2016	International Journal of Educational Sciences	12	3
Channa, M. A.; Abassi, A. M.; John, S.; Mohammad, J. K.; Memon, M. A.; Nordin, Z. S.	Reading Comprehension and Metacognitive Strategies in First Year Engineering University Students in Pakistan	2018	International Journal of English Linguistics	8	6
Chason, L.; Loyet, D.; Sorenson, L.; Stoops, A.	An Approach for Embedding Critical Thinking in Second Language Paragraph Writing	2017	TESOL Journal	8	3
Chen, Weijie.	An Investigation of Topic Sentences in Chinese Students' Argumentative Essays: A Multidimensional Probe	2011	Kristianstad University	Spring 2011	
Chessell, Pam; Birstihl, Howard; Tandberg, Ron	Essay writing: a guide	1982	<i>book</i>		
Chien, S. C.	College students' awareness in organizational strategy use in English writing A Taiwan-based study	2015	English Teaching-Practice and Critique	14	2
Clanchy, John; Ballard, Brigid	Essay writing for students: a practical guide	1997	<i>book</i>		
Connelly, Jacqueline; Forsyth, Patrick B.	Essay writing skills: essential techniques to gain top marks	2012	<i>book</i>		
Cowan, T. L.	Literary Disestablishmentarianism	2006	English Studies in Canada	32	
D'Angelo, Frank J.	The Topic Sentence Revisited	1986	College Composition and Communication	37	4
Davey, Beth; Miller, Debra	Topicalization and the processing of expository prose by children: Mediating effects of cognitive styles and content familiarity	1990	Educational Psychology	10	1
Davis, Lloyd; McKay, Susan	Structures and strategies: an introduction to academic writing	1996	<i>book</i>		
De Fazio, Teresa	Studying part time without stress	2002	<i>book</i>		
Dean, Kitty Chen	Essentials of the essay: writing, reading, and grammar	1999	<i>book</i>		
Dee-Lucas, Diana; Di Vesta, Francis J.	Learner-generated organizational aids: Effects on learning from text	1980	Journal of Educational Psychology	72	3

Derish, Pamela; Eastwood, Susan	A Clarity Clinic for Surgical Writing	2008	Journal of Surgical Research	147	1
Dolle, R.	Topic Sentences	1992	Journal of Environmental Health	55	3
Duigu, Gabi	Essay writing for English tests	2002	<i>book</i>		
Education Scotland	Literacy and English: experiences and outcomes	2017	<i>curriculum document</i>		
Ellis, Matt	How to Write Masterful Topic Sentences for Essays	2022	<i>book</i>		
Endresniggemeyer, B.; Maier, E.; Sigel, A.	How to Implement a Naturalistic Model of Abstracting – 4 Core Working Steps of an Expert Abstractor	1995	Information Processing & Management	31	5
Fava-Verd�, Amanda; Manning, Anthony; Nukui, Clare	Essay writing	2015	<i>book</i>		
Flanagan, Sara; Bouck, Emily C.	The Pen or the Paper?: Written Expression Supports for Secondary Students with Emotional Behavioral Disabilities	2015	Journal of Literacy & Technology	16	2
Flynn, Paul; O'Donnell, Luke; Houlihan, Barry	A guide to writing historical research essays for second level students	2021	<i>book</i>		
Fraser, Carrie	Topic Sentences (Academic Writing for Success)	2024	<i>website</i>		
Germov, John	Get great marks for your essays, reports, and presentations	2011	<i>book</i>		
Ghazzoul, N.	Topic Sentence Coaching: Keys to Unlock Intricacy of Academic Writing	2018	Pertanika Journal of Social Science and Humanities	26	2
Greasley, Peter	Doing essays & assignments: essential tips for students	2011	<i>book</i>		
Gunner, Jennifer	Examples of Topic Sentences That Make the Purpose Clear (yourdictionary.com)	2022	<i>website</i>		
Hadsel, Martha	Cognitive Style as Variable in Paragraph Writing	1986	Journal of Creative Behavior	20	1
Hall, Jenny	Using Topic Sentences (University of Toronto)	n.d.	<i>website</i>		
Haluska, Jan Charles	In defence of the formula essay	2007	Academic Questions	20	1
Hamilton, Carole L.	Anthem guide to essay writing	2011	<i>book</i>		
Hare, Victoria Chou; Borchardt, Kathleen M.	Direct instruction of summarization skills	1984	Reading Research Quarterly	20	1
Headrick, Paul	The Wiley guide to writing essays about literature	2013	<i>book</i>		
Hicks, Rodney W.	Tips for new and experienced authors: Focus on the paragraph	2020	Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners	32	10

Hidi, Suzanne; Anderson, Valerie	Producing written summaries: task demands, cognitive operations, and implications for instruction	1986	Review of Educational Research	56	
historyskills. com	How to write topic sentences	n.d.	website		
Hochman, Judith C.; Wexler, Natalie; Maloney, Kathleen; Lemov, Doug	The Writing Revolution 2.0: A Guide to Advancing Thinking Through Writing in All Subjects and Grades	2024	book		
Hocking, Darryl; Toh, Glenn	EAP Writing: Reflections on Divergent Perceptions and Expectations among Tutors and Students	2010	Asian Journal of English Language Teaching	20	
Hoover, Theresa M.; Kubina, Richard M.; Mason, Linda H.	Effects of Self-Regulated Strategy Development for POW+TREE on High School Students with Learning Disabilities	2012	Exceptionality	20	1
Hunter, Ian	Write that essay: a practical guide to writing better essays and achieving higher grades	2008	book		
Indeed Editorial Team	How To Write a Topic Sentence (With Examples and Tips)	2025	website		
Ishikawa, K.; Kunichika, H.; Learning; Educ Technologies Res Unit; Res Council Evidence Driven Educ; Asia Pacific Soc Comp Educ; Uchida Yoko Co Ltd; Photron, Ltd; Kyoto, Univ	Analysis of topic sentences of classification paragraphs and development of a diagnostic function	2023	31st International Conference on Computers in Education (ICCE)		
Jia, X. G.; Tian, J. G.; Int, Sci; Educ Res Assoc; Beijing Gireida Educ Co Ltd; Wuhan Univ, Sci; Technol,	Research on College English Writing on the Macro Discourse Level Based on Web Resources	2011	International Conference on Advances in Computer Science, Environment, Ecoinformatics, and Education	218	
Jwa, Soomin	Korean EFL students' argumentative writing in L1 and L2: A comparative move analysis study	2020	English Teaching	19	2
Kambe, G.; Rayner, K.; Duffy, S. A.	Global context effects on processing lexically ambiguous words: Evidence from eye fixations	2001	Memory & Cognition	29	2
Knight, Kim	Essay writing for adolescents with language and learning difficulties: Practical strategies for English teachers	2022	book		
Kubina, Richard M.; Mason, Linda H.; Vostal, Brooks R.; Taft, Raol J.	Self-Regulated Strategy Development Instruction: Effects of Lesson Structure on a Teacher's Behaviors	2011	Learning Disabilities: A Multidisciplinary Journal	17	3
Liebman, Jesse	How to write any high school essay	2017	book		
Liu, Jessica (Scribbr)	How to Write a Topic Sentence	2020	website		

Liu, X. H.; Furneaux, C.	A multidimensional comparison of discourse organization in English and Chinese university students' argumentative writing	2014	International Journal of Applied Linguistics	24	1
Lo, J. J.; Yeh, S. W.; Sung, C. S.	Learning paragraph structure with online annotations: An interactive approach to enhancing EFL reading comprehension	2013	System	41	2
Lo, J. J.; Yeh, S. W.; Sung, C. S.; Hong Kong Web Soc; Shanghai, Univ	A Scaffolding Support System for English Essay Reading	2010	9th International Conference on Advances in Web-Based Learning	6483	
Lorch Jr, Robert F.; Lorch, Elizabeth Pugzles; Mogan, Ann M.	Task Effects and Individual Differences in On-Line Processing of the Topic Structure of a Text	1987	Discourse Processes	10	1
Lorch, Elizabeth P.	On-line Processing of Topic Structure by Children and Adults	1987	Journal of Experimental Child Psychology	43	1
Lorch, Robert F.	Integration of topic and subordinate information during reading	1993	Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition	19	5
Lorch, Robert F.; Lorch, Elizabeth P.	Topic structure representation and text recall	1985	Journal of Educational Psychology	77	2
Lorch, Robert F.; Lorch, Elizabeth P.; Matthews, Patricia D.	On-line processing of the topic structure of a text	1985	Journal of Memory and Language	24	3
Lumen Learning	Characteristics of a Strong Topic Sentence	n.d.	<i>website</i>		
Mackenzie, Jock	Essay writing: teaching the basics from the ground up	2007	<i>book</i>		
Mason, Linda H.; Kubina, Richard M., Jr.; Taft, Raol J.	Developing Quick Writing Skills of Middle School Students With Disabilities	2011	The Journal of Special Education	44	4
MasterClass	How to Write a Topic Sentence: 3 Topic Sentence Examples	2022	<i>website</i>		
Matrix Education	How to write a topic sentence	n.d.	<i>website</i>		
Maxworthy, Andrea Giese; Barry, Arlene	Can Middle School Students Summarize?	1992	Reading Horizons	32	3
May, Carole Anne	Spotlight on critical skills in essay writing	2009			
McCarthy, Philip M.; Renner, Adam M.; Duncan, Michael G.; Duran, Nicholas D.; Lightman, Erin J.; McNamara, Danielle S.	Identifying topic sentencehood	2008	Behavior Research Methods	40	3

McCombes, Shona	How to Write Topic Sentences 4 Steps, Examples & Purpose (Scribbr)	2023	<i>website</i>		
McKnight, Lucinda	Since Feeling Is First: The Art of Teaching to Write Paragraphs	2021	English in Education	55	1
McLaren, Stephen	Easy writer: a student's guide to writing essays & reports	1997	<i>book</i>		
McLaren, Stephen	HSC essay writing made easy	2020	<i>book</i>		
Miller, Ryan T.; Pessoa, Silvia	Where's Your Thesis Statement and What Happened to Your Topic Sentences? Identifying Organizational Challenges in Undergraduate Student Argumentative Writing	2016	TESOL Journal	7	4
Ministry of Education Singapore	Subjects for Normal (Academic) course	2024	<i>curriculum document</i>		
Murphy, Eamon	Essay writing made simple	2007	<i>book</i>		
Murray, John D.; McGlone, Chadd	Topic overviews and processing of topic structure	1997	Journal of Educational Psychology	89	2
Nicholas, Karen R.; Menchetti, Bruce M.; Nettles, Stephen M.	An Exploratory Investigation of Structured Writing Strategy Training for African-American College Students with Learning Disabilities	2005	Journal of College Reading & Learning	36	1
NSW Education Standards Authority	English K-10 Syllabus: Stage 4	2023	English K-10 Syllabus		
Walden University: Office of Academic Support and Instructional Services	Body Paragraphs	n.d.	<i>website</i>		
Page, Mary; Winstanley, Carrie	Writing essays for dummies	2009	<i>book</i>		
Peichin, Chang	Evaluating Coherence in Experts' and Students' Research Arguments: An Exploratory Study	2017	English Teaching & Learning	41	2
Pessoa, Silvia; Mitchell, Thomas D.; Reilly, Benjamin	Scaffolding the Writing of Argumentative Essays in History: A Functional Approach	2019	History Teacher	52	3
Peterson, Laura N.; French, Lucia	Summarization strategies of hearing-impaired and normally hearing college students	1988	Journal of Speech & Hearing Research	31	3
Pigford, Aretha B.	Teach Your Students to Write Paragraphs Good Enough to Eat	1987	Clearing House	60	9
Piriyasilpa, Y.	Teaching 'periodicity' in an EFL writing class to help students develop ideas from paragraph to text: A classroom case study	2012	Linguistics and the Human Sciences	8	1
Popken, Randall L.	A Study of Topic Sentence Use in Academic Writing	1987	Written Communication	4	2
Popken, Randall L.	A Study of Topic Sentence Use in Scientific Writing	1988	Journal of Technical Writing and Communication	18	1

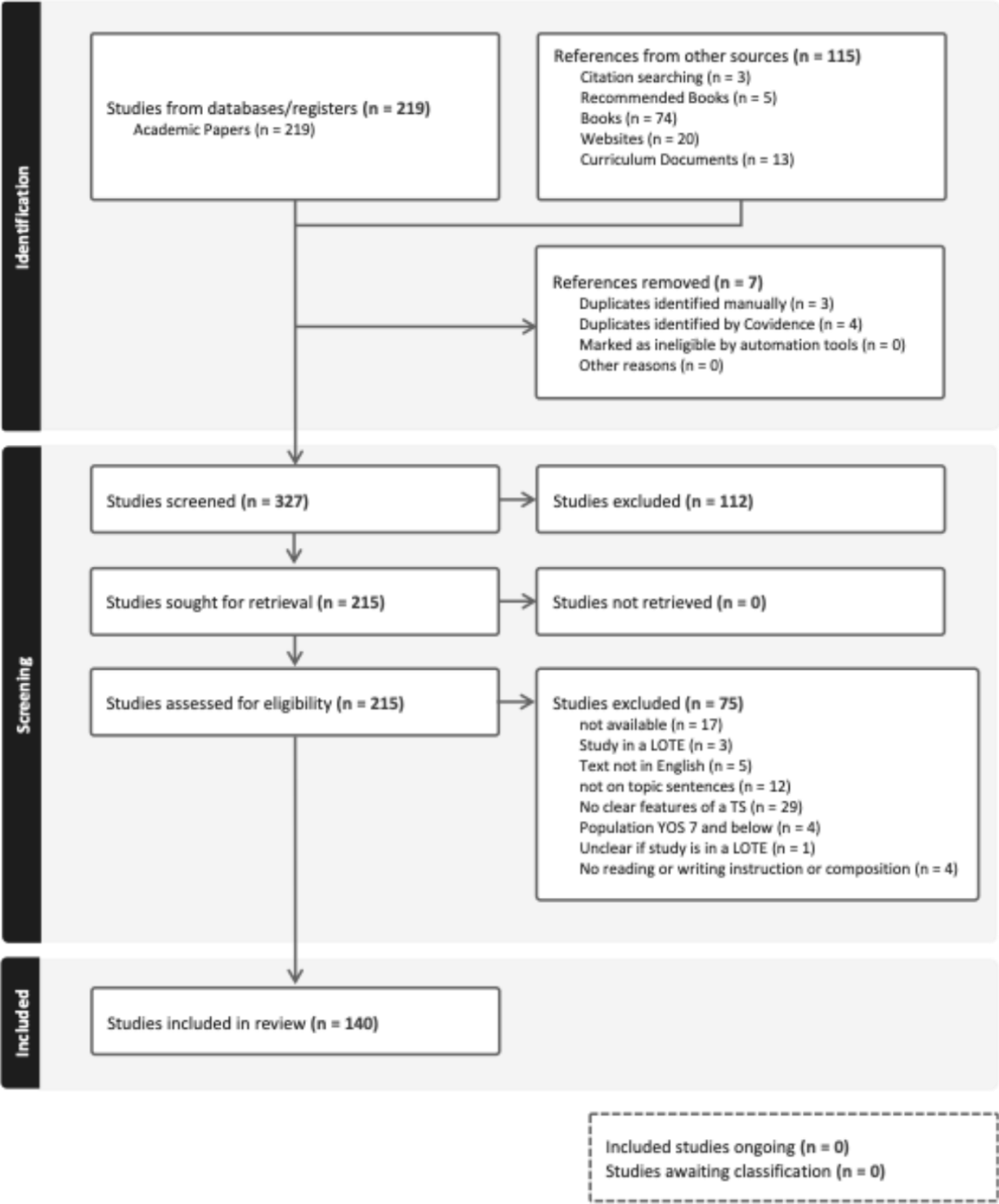
Qanbari, E. T.; Nemati, M.; Tohidian, I.	A Comparative Study of Textual Features of Iranian and English Recommendation Letters	2014	Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes	2	2
Qi, F.	The Features of Rhetorical Patterns in English Expository Essays by Chinese EFL English Majors and the Pedagogical Issues of Teaching L2 Writing at the Tertiary Level in China	2009	Asian Englishes	12	1
Rao, Valli; Chanock, Kate; Krishnan, Lakshmi	A visual guide to essay writing: how to develop and communicate academic argument	2007	<i>Book</i>		
Roberts, Jamie Q.	Essentials of essay writing: what markers look for	2017	<i>Book</i>		
Roever, Carol	Using The Wall Street Journal to Stimulate Critical Thinking	1998	Business Communication Quarterly	61	3
Rooks, Clay; Boyd, Robert	Inductive Reasoning and Writing	2003	Teaching English in the Two Year College	31	2
Roundy, Nancy	A Program for Revision in Business and Technical Writing	1983	Journal of Business Communication	20	1
Russell-Matthews, Frances	The essay-writing handbook	1990	<i>Book</i>		
Sedita, Joan	The Writing Rope: A Framework for Explicit Writing Instruction in All Subjects	2023	<i>Book</i>		
Setyowati, Lestari; Sukmawan, Sony; El-Sulukiyyah, Ana Ahsana	Investigating the Students' Writing Ability in Responding to Environmental Issue	2019	Arab World English Journal	10	4
Shahhoseiny, Hajar	A Study of Errors in the Paragraph Writing of EFL Learners: A Case Study of First Year Translation Students at University of Applied Science and Technology in Bushehr, Iran	2015	Theory and Practice in Language Studies	5	6
Shields, MunLing	Essay writing: a student's guide	2010	<i>book</i>		
Smith, Craig G.	Braddock Revisited: The Frequency and Placement of Topic Sentences in Academic Writing	2008	Reading Matrix: An International Online Journal	8	1
Soles, Derek	The academic essay: how to plan, draft, revise, and write essays	2005	<i>book</i>		
Spurr, Barry	Essay-writing for HSC English	2006	<i>book</i>		
SUU Writing Center	Topic Sentences	n.d.	<i>website</i>		
Taber, Susan	Outside the Box--More Pieces of a Thesis Parts 2 and 3	2018	Educational Therapist	39	1
The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority	The Victorian Curriculum F-10: Version 2.0	2024	<i>Curriculum document</i>		
Thomas, Anuja; McCarthy, Philip; Khawlah, Ahmed; Kaddoura, Noor; Duran, Nicholas	How it all ends: A model for teaching paragraph ending sentences to L2 students	2022	Journal of Education and Instruction	12	3

Touro University Writing Center	Topic Sentence	n.d.	<i>website</i>		
Tseng, Christine Chifen	Subsumable Relationship Among Error Types of EFL Writers: A Learner Corpus-Based Study of Expository Writing at the Intermediate	2016	English Teaching & Learning	40	1
Viau, Elizabeth Anne	Shades of meaning: Using color to enhance reading	1998	Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy	41	6
Vyhmeister, Nancy J.	Quality research papers for students of religion and theology	2008	<i>book</i>		
Walker, Holden	How to Write a Topic Sentence for Your English Paragraphs with Examples	n.d.	<i>website</i>		
Wang, Danhua	Factors Affecting the Comprehension of Global and Local Main Idea	2009	Journal of College Reading and Learning	39	2
Warburton, Nigel	The basics of essay writing	2020	<i>book</i>		
Whereat, Amy; Leventhal, Phillip S.	Structuring paragraphs	2017	Medical Writing	26	1
Williams, Joanna P.; Taylor, Maravene B.; Ganger, Sonia	Text variations at the level of the individual sentence and the comprehension of simple expository paragraphs	1981	Journal of Educational Psychology	73	6
St Louis Community College Writing Center	Topic Sentence and Paragraph	n.d.	<i>website</i>		
Indiana University Writing Tutorial Services	Paragraphs & Topic Sentences	n.d.	<i>website</i>		
Yu, Shuying	Paragraph Comprehension from the Perspective of Conjunctions and Structure under Structuralism	2022	English Language Teaching	15	7
Zarina, M. K. P.; Fatimah, M. G. H.; Int Org Ctr Acad, Res	The Effects of Concept Mapping on Matriculation Students' Essay Writing Performance	2015	2nd International Conference on Education and Social Sciences (INTCESS)		
Zheng, Yanping	Text Coherence in Translation	2009	English Language Teaching	2	3

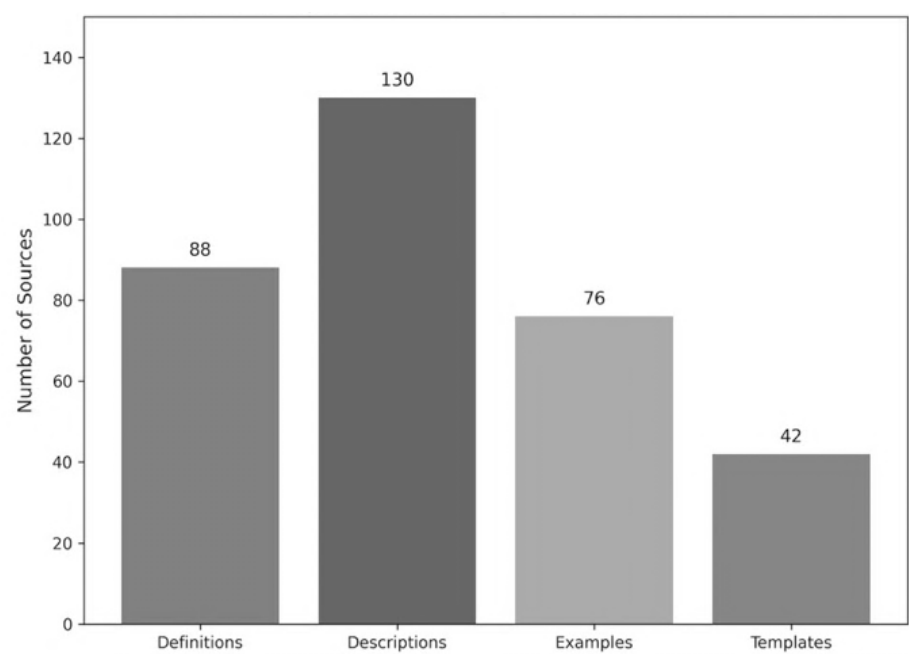
Example search strategy for one academic database

Platform	EBSCOHost
Selected databases	Academic Search Complete, APA PsychArticles, APA PsycInfo, Communication & Mass Media Complete, Education Source, ERIC, MasterFILE Complete, Psychology and Behavioural Sciences Collection.
Search date	10/6/2025
Limits	• 1980-2025 • Academic journals • Articles in English • Search title and abstracts only
Search	Advanced search TI “topic sentence*” OR AB “topic sentence*”
Hits	n=134

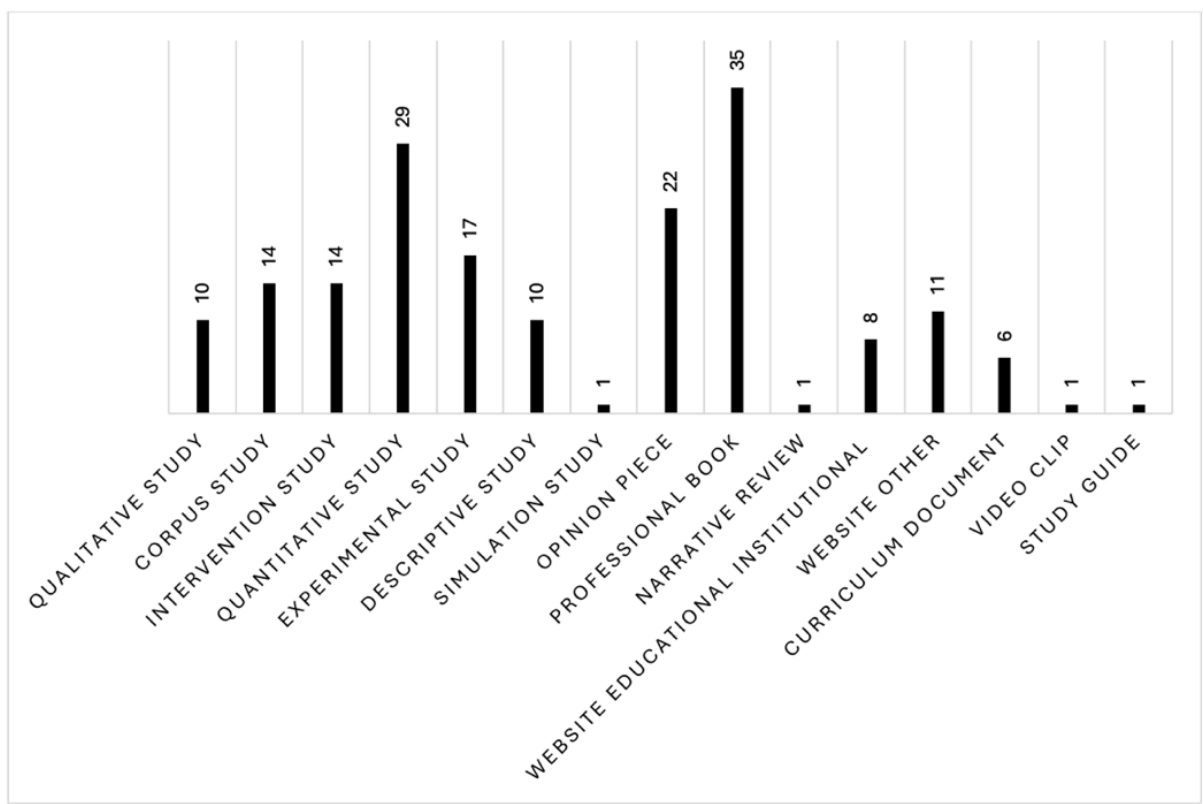
PRISMA Flowchart for screening, review and extraction of sources from Covidence



Nature of information provided by sources on topic sentence features.



Source and study type frequency across 139 sources



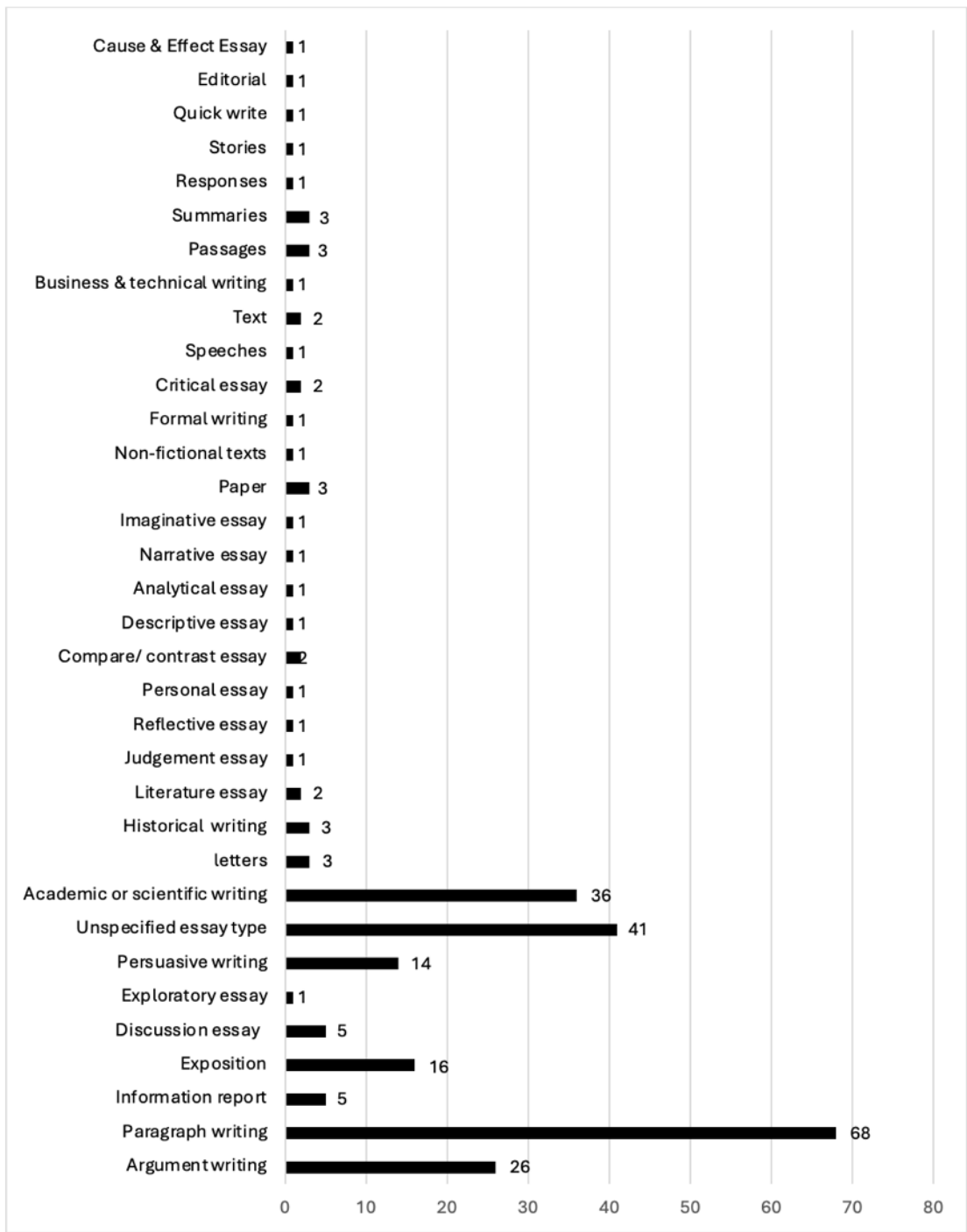
Populations tested or targeted across all sources

Population	Number of Sources
Adults with written expression difficulties	1
Researchers	5
Professionals	11
Senior secondary students	2
Secondary grade 7 (12 y/o*)	1
Secondary grade 8 (13 y/o)	1
Secondary grades 7-8 (12-13 y/o)	1
Secondary grades 7-9 (12-14 y/o)	1
Secondary grades 7-10 (12-15 y/o)	1
Primary & Secondary students	4
All secondary students (12-18 y/o)	20
Educators	12
Tertiary students	71
EAL/D students	27

Top 10 synonyms for the 'topic sentence' and their frequency across all sources.

Synonyms for 'topic sentence'	Frequency across sources
main idea	16
point	11
claim	6
opening sentence	5
topic statement	5
first sentence	4
hyper-Theme	3
main sentence	3
theme	3
focus sentence	2

Modality contexts of topic sentences information in sources



The Incidence of Topic Sentence Features Across Papers, Books, Websites and Curricula in English

Topic sentence feature	Number of sources	Incidence	Example	Prevalence category
Main idea	124	88%	<i>A paragraph's topic sentence must be general enough to express the paragraph's overall subject (Zarina & Fatimah, 2015)</i>	Prevailing
Paragraph initial	123	87%	<i>...most topic sentences in English are written as the first sentence of each paragraph (Abhinan, 2025)</i>	Prevailing
Supports paragraph & essay structure	77	55%	<i>Look back at your topic sentence from time to time to make sure that you have not drifted out of the confines of its stated territory for this paragraph (Hamilton, 2011a)</i>	Common
Whole-text cohesion	70	50%	<i>Use your topic sentences to make claims that relate to the thesis statement (Pessoa et al., 2019)</i>	Common
Facilitates reading	50	35%	<i>A paragraph is easier to read when each sentence starts with something the reader already knows. (Alexander, 2019)</i>	Occasional
Paragraph middle	37	26%	<i>Occasionally, the topic sentence logically falls in the middle of a paragraph (Dolle, 1992)</i>	Occasional
Paragraph end	36	25%	<i>...it may be the final sentence of a paragraph (Singapore, 2024)</i>	Occasional

Simple & clear sentence	35	25%	<i>Make sure you start with a clear topic sentence (Fava-Verde et al., 2015)</i>	Occasional
Can be implied	34	24%	<i>Unfortunately, not all paragraphs contain topic sentences. (Hare & Borchardt, 1984)</i>	Rare
Two-part sentence structure	23	16%	<i>Topic sentence = topic + main idea (Bowen, 2023)</i>	Rare
Process: Write first	15	10%	<i>you might first ask students to write a one-sentence summary of a news article. That sentence could become the topic sentence (Hochman et al., 2024)</i>	Rare
Multiple in one paragraph	8	5%	<i>remember you can actually have up to two sentences which act as your topic sentence (Walker, n.d.)</i>	Rare
Complex sentence structure	7	5%	<i>A good Topic Sentence gives specific information... [and] is usually preceded by words such as "because", "due to", or "as a result of". (historyskills.com, n.d.)</i>	Rare
Process: Write last	6	4%	<i>If the [body] paragraph is useful, but you haven't yet put its main point into words, do that now, and put that sentence at the beginning of the paragraph (Rao et al., 2007)</i>	Rare

Notes: Incidence of features across sources: Prevailing = $\geq 75\%$, Common = 50-74%, Occasional = 25-49%, Rare = 1-24%.

We propose the following definition of a topic sentence based on the prevailing features:

A topic sentence is the first sentence in an expository body paragraph and expresses the main idea of the paragraph.